

ORGANIC FOODS

Matthew N. O. Sadiku¹, Sarhan M. Musa¹, and Osama M. Musa²

¹Roy G. Perry College of Engineering Prairie View A&M University Prairie View, TX 77446

²Ashland Inc. Bridgewater, NJ 08807

ABSTRACT: *Organic foods refer to products that are grown naturally or produced by methods that comply with the standards of organic farming. They are not only environmentally friendly, they are also healthy. Many people believe organic foods are healthier than conventional food. Today, organic foods have become very popular and everyone wants to know about their benefits. This paper provides a brief introduction on organic foods and their pros and cons.*

KEY WORDS: *organic foods, conventional foods, organic farming, organic agriculture*

I. INTRODUCTION

Food provides us with essential nutrients to lead a healthy lifestyle, but how food is grown, raised, and processed can have a significant impact on our mental and emotional health. The common use of pesticides and chemical-based fertilizers in food production have increased productivity but have also had negative impact on the environment. Many consumers desire to have foods produced through environmentally friendly processes. Organic foods are widely believed to meet this demand [1]. The term “organic” denotes a product of a production system that is socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. The term “organic food” refers to the way agricultural products are grown and processed. They are crops that are grown without the use of harmful pesticides, irradiation, fertilizers, and other synthetic materials. Organic foods include fruits, vegetables, cereals, and animal products. The organic farming movement arose in the 1940s to combat the industrialization of agriculture. Organic farmers believe what they put into the soil has a profound impact on what they get out of it. Organic farming delivers environmental sustainability, biodiversity, animal welfare, and food quality benefits compared with conventional farming. Organic agriculture is the production system in which farming practices do without the application of artificial fertilizers and chemicals. It has been shown to have less environmental impact than conventional approaches. It has received increasing attention from consumers, government, and industry worldwide due to the many perceived benefits it offers.

II. ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Organic food production is regulated by the government in some countries. Regulatory bodies ensure that foods are regulated in a manner that maximizes health and minimizes health risk. Organic farmers are required to obtain certification to market their foods as organic. Countries such as United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, and Japan require producers to obtain special certification to market food as organic. Certification is basically aimed at regulating and facilitating the distribution, marketing, and sale of organic products. It is intended to protect consumers from misuse of the term “organic.” The focus is on the quality of ingredients. Any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including farmers, food processors, retailers, and restaurants.

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards recognize four types of organic production [2]:

- Crops: “Plants that are grown to be harvested as food, livestock feed, or fiber used to add nutrients to the field.”
- Livestock: “Animals that can be used in the production of food, fiber, or feed.”
- Processed/multi-ingredient products: “Items that have been processed (e.g. bread or soup).”
- Wild crops: “Plants from a growing site that is not cultivated.”

III. ADVANTAGES

Before switching to producing or consuming organic foods, one must weigh their advantages and disadvantages. One of the primary benefits of eating organic is lower levels of pesticides. Although organic farmers do use pesticides, they only use naturally-derived pesticides rather than the synthetic pesticides used on conventional commercial farms [3].

They do not use chemical means and synthetic fertilizers to process their products. They use manure instead of fertilizers. By avoiding chemicals, growing organic foods protect the environment from pollution. Consumers buy organic food for the following reasons [4]: organic food is healthier, more nutritious and safer, no chemicals are used, environmental concern, and tastes better than conventional food. Claims that organic food tastes better are hard to prove scientifically. The perception that organic food is low-calorie food or healthy food seems common. Organic food consumption may reduce overweight, obesity, and the risk of allergic disease.

IV. DISADVANTAGES

Organic food is often more expensive because it is more labor intensive, and farmers do not use pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or drugs. It normally costs 20-100% more than conventional food. The handling of organic foods results in higher costs because it is mandatory to separate organic and conventional products. Since organic foods are produced without artificial preservatives or irradiation, they tend to be spoiled faster than non-organic food. Sometimes, it may be hard to find organic food at a store near you [5].

V. CONCLUSIONS

Simply put, organic foods are foods grown without pesticides. Consumption of organic food has increased lately. Demand for organic foods is primarily driven by concerns for personal health and for the environment. Although organic food currently accounts for 1–2% of total food production worldwide, production of organic products is growing rapidly. Today, organic food has become popular. Before jumping on the organic bandwagon, consider the pros and cons given above.

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AUTHORS

Matthew N.O. Sadiku is a professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas. He is the author of several books and papers. His areas of research interest include computational electromagnetics and computer networks. He is a fellow of IEEE.

Sarhan M. Musa is a professor in the Department of Engineering Technology at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He has been the director of Prairie View Networking Academy, Texas, since 2004. He is an LTD Sprint and Boeing Welliver Fellow.

Osama M. Musa is currently Vice President and Chief Technology Officer for Ashland Inc. Dr. Musa also serves as a member of the Advisory Board at Manhattan College's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering as well as a member of the Board of Trustees at Chemists' Club of NYC. Additionally, he sits on the Advisory Board of the International Journal of Humanitarian Technology (IJHT).